(c) whether there is any proposal to effect an increase in the said financial assistance?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) Yes, Sir. Banks provide loan to farmers for purchase of fertilizers, seeds and implements, etc.

(b) The amount of crop loan provided by banks in Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh is as under:—

(Rs. crore)

	2004-05	2005-06
Uttar Pradesh Madhya	4955.00	7137.00
Pradesh	3651.35	4897.13

(c) During 2006-07, National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development would be providing refinance assistance to State Cooperative Banks upto 40% at interest rate of 2.5% p.a. for financing Short-Term (Seasonal Agricultural Operations) loans.

Committee probing into the cause for suicides

2266. SHRI M. V. MYSURA REDDY: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Committee appointed by the Prime Minister to probe the causes of growing farmers' suicides has submitted its report:

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the measures recommended to redress the alarming situation and the action proposed in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) to (c) No Committee has been appointed by the Prime Minister exclusively to probe the causes of growing suicide cases by farmers. At the instance of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), a Fact Finding Team was constituted by the Planning Commission to, *inter alia,* find out the factors leading to rural distress in the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra and to study the existing relief packages

announced by the State Government, and to recommend necessary measures for addressing the issue of rural distress. The Team has given various recommendation such as provisions for distribution of appropriate seeds, advisory and extension services, waiver of institutional credit, disciplining unlicensed money lenders, streamlining institutional credit flow, water harvesting and conservation, regional development plans, procurement and pricing, value addition of cotton, empowerment of farmer growers, setting up contributory fund and self help groups, and crop insurance.

The Prime Minister alongwith Agriculture Minister visited the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra during 30th June to 1st July, 2006 and announced a detailed package of assistance to the affected districts which, *inter alia,* contains provision for *ex-gratia* assistance from the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund, debt relief to farmers, enhanced credit flow, interest waiver, assured irrigation facilities, seed replacement and cropping intensity, watershed development, horticulture development, micro irrigation, extension services, and subsidiary income opportunities. Actions are underway for implementation of the package. The PMO as well as Ministry of Agriculture is regularly reviewing the progress of implementation to ensure that the benefit of the announced package reaches the needy farmers fully and expeditiously.

At the instance of the PMO, a Planning Commission team alongwith officials of the Government of Kerala visited Wayanad district of the State from 7th to 11th June, 2006, to study the problems pertaining to agricultural distress in the district and suggest remedial measures. The team submitted its report to the Planning Commission which is being examined.

Suicides in Bundelkhand

2267. KUMARI NIRMALA DESHPANDE. Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether a large number of small and marginal farmers in the backward area of Bundelkhand, Uttar Pradesh are committing suicides, but no steps have been taken yet to help the farmers;

(b) whether there is any proposal to declare any package for Bundelkhand like that of Vidarbha; and